

Wisconsin Trail Etiquette & Safety Guidelines

Tips for Trail Users



Consideration and **polite behavior** are essential in order to ensure the enjoyment of all trail users and protection of our natural resources.

General Etiquette for all Trail Users

1. Treat all trail users with respect and courtesy regardless of their sport, speed, or skill level.
2. Protect our environment. Stay on the trail. Do not cut switchbacks or use shortcuts.
3. Stay to the right and pass on the left. Always look before changing positions on the trail.
4. Share the trail, watch and listen for others.
5. Learn and use appropriate hand signals. Motorized users often cannot hear voice signals.



6. Respect trail closures; use only trails posted open. Obey posted signs.
7. Carry out all litter, including your pet's waste.
8. All users yield to horseback riders.
9. When encountering a horse, speak in a calm, pleasant tone so the horse hears a human voice. Do not hide.
10. The rider knows the horse the best. Expect the rider to advise you, not as a lack of courtesy, but rather with knowledge of the horse's temperament.
11. Downhill traffic yields to uphill traffic and faster users yield to slower users.
12. Do not approach, scare, harass, or feed wildlife or livestock.
13. Respect private property and the privacy of people living along the trail.
14. Dogs are a potential fright for both people and horses. Pets must be kept on leashes (less than eight feet in length) and under control.
15. Leave flowers and plants for others to enjoy. Do not pull bark off of, cut or otherwise damage live trees.
16. Practice low-impact trail use. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage. When trail is soft, consider other options.
17. Travel at a safe and controlled speed. Be especially careful when visibility is limited.



Etiquette for Walkers, Hikers and Backpackers

1. Do not climb fences—use stiles.
2. Always yield to equestrians. When a horse approaches, stop, and ask the rider for instructions.
3. If you meet a horse and rider while backpacking, leave your pack on and talk calmly with the rider.

Etiquette for Runners

1. When a horse approaches, stop, and ask the rider for instructions.
2. Warn people when you are about to pass. Use your voice to warn equestrians.
3. When encountering oncoming users, advise them about the number of runners in your group.



Etiquette for In-Line Skating

1. Avoid sudden stops and last-minute turns. You don't want to surprise anyone.
2. Be aware of your surroundings by glancing over your shoulder.
3. Be careful around other users. Don't swing your arms and leap wildly back and forth on your skates.



Etiquette for Bicyclists

1. Ride single file. You can ride two or more abreast if you will not block other traffic. On curving or hilly trails, ride single file.
2. Control your speed. Trails are not an appropriate place for high speed riding.
3. Obey traffic signs and signals. Use hand signals to indicate left or right turns, slowing or stopping.
4. When passing, go slow and give an audible signal.
5. At night, use a headlight, taillight, and reflectors.



Etiquette for Mountain Bikers

1. Yield right-of-way to all other users. Always yield to uphill users.
2. Never pass a horse from behind. Calmly call out that you want to pass, so the rider can turn the horse around to face your bike. Then you can pass safely.
3. If there is a horse coming towards you, it is best to just stop your bike and allow the horse to pass you. Don't forget to say hello.
4. Control your bike; be ready and able to stop. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations. Riding a corner cleanly, without sliding, preserves the trail.
5. Slow down and use caution when approaching another user. Use your voice to make your presence known well in advance.



Etiquette for Equestrians

1. Make sure your horse has the temperament and training for riding on congested trails.
2. Advise other trail users of your horse's temperament, e.g., a horse with a tendency to kick should always wear a red ribbon in the tail. Assume that not everyone will know what the ribbon means, so be prepared to explain or take the necessary precautions to avoid trouble.
3. Obey posted speed/gait limits. Avoid cantering or galloping on busy trails.
4. Know your horse's limitations.
5. Leave gates as you find them. Obey gate closures and regulatory signs.
6. Let other trail users know when it is safe to pass your horse.
7. Announce your intention to pass others. Come to a walk and pass on the left.
8. Always pick up after your horse. Keep the trail head clear of manure and trash. Try to keep the trail clean of manure. Individual trails may require that you pick up manure.



Etiquette for Cross-Country Skiers

1. Don't ski on closed trails or foot trails.
2. Do not obstruct ski trails or intersections.
3. When stopped, step to the side, out of tracks.
4. Yield the trail to skiers that overtake you from behind.
5. If you fall, move off the track as quickly as possible.
6. Know the trail difficulty symbols and ski within your abilities.
7. Skate skiers should stay off classic tracks.



Etiquette for Snowshoers

1. Snowshoe in designated areas and keep off groomed ski trails.
2. Give skiers the right of way.



Etiquette for Snowmobile & ATV Riders

1. Ride quietly when around houses, campgrounds, and other non-riders. Keep the rpm's and speed low and steady. ATVs must have U.S. Forest Service approved spark arrestors.
2. Do not exceed 10 M.P.H. when traveling within 100' of a non-motorized user or 150' of a dwelling.
3. Do not operate vehicle in a careless way that may endanger people or property.



4. When **approaching** an oncoming horseback rider, stop your vehicle. Shut off your engine. Take off your helmet and calmly say hello. Avoid any sudden movements. Let the horse pass.
5. When **passing** a horseback rider, alert the rider to your presence by calmly calling out you wish to pass. The horseback rider should pull the horse over. If the rider has the horse under control, proceed on. If not, allow the rider to move the horse to a safe spot on the trail and then proceed.
6. Avoid riding after heavy rains.
7. Park your ATV/snowmobile and walk to sensitive, historic, scenic, and cultural areas.
8. **Stay on the trail** and stay away from areas posted closed. They may be sensitive, historic, or cultural areas such as burial sites.
9. Yield the right of way to hikers, bikers, and horses.



Safety Tips for All Users

1. Have a pre-planned route; carry maps and a compass.
2. Inform someone of your plans.
3. Be prepared for all kinds of weather. Know the symptoms of heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and hypothermia.
4. Wear or bring appropriate attire, including a hat and sunblock. Always wear appropriate safety gear.
5. Stay within the limits of your ability. Do not overexert yourself or ride too fast.
6. Bring plenty of water. Treat stream, river, or lake water before use.
7. Carry first aid supplies and insect repellent and know how to use them.
8. Use a headlight, taillight, reflectors, and retroreflective clothing at night.
9. Keep your equipment in good repair.
10. Do not use trails when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.



Enjoy the outdoors? Have interest or talents you would like to share? Enjoy helping people? Concerned about our state's natural and cultural resources? If so, then Wisconsin's trails need your skills and talents!

Volunteer applications can be found at property offices or online:

www.wiparks.net

Volunteers Make Trails Happen!

You are responsible for knowing the laws that apply to your use and to the location where you recreate. The way you use the trail will influence trail management decisions and policies.

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